

Amendments to the Drawings:

The attached replacement drawing sheet makes changes to Figs. 15 and 16 and replaces the original sheet with Figs. 15 and 16.

REMARKS

Claims 1-3, 6, 8-15 and 17-27 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, Figs. 15 and 17 are amended, paragraphs [0065], [0066] and [0079] of the specification of the published application are amended, claims 1, 2, 6, 8, 10-13 and 15 are amended and claims 4, 5, 7 and 16 are canceled without prejudice or disclaimer to the subject matter therein. By this Amendment, claims 19-27 are added. Support for the amendments to claim 1 may be found at least on page 15, lines 20-21 and page 21, lines 4-7 of the originally filed specification, in Figs. 2, 5 and 6 and in originally filed claims 4, 11 and 16. Support for the amendments to claims 10 and 13 may be found at least at page 22, line 31 to page 23, line 1 of the originally filed application, and in Figs. 1(b), 3, 4 and 7. Support for the amendment to claim 11 may be found at least at page 15, lines 20-21 of the originally filed specification. Support for the amendment to claim 15 may be found at least at page 21, lines 4-7 of the originally filed specification, and in Figs. 2, 5 and 6. Support for the new claims may be found in the originally filed specification at least at page 15, lines 20-21; page 21, lines 4-7; page 22, line 31 to page 23, line 1; page 14, line 21; page 23, line 28 to page 24, line 2; page 23, lines 22-28; page 23, lines 18-22; and in Figs. 1(b) and 2-7. No new matter is added by the above amendment. In view of at least the following, reconsideration and allowance are respectfully requested.

I. Drawing Objection

The Office Action objects to Figs. 15 and 16 for not being labeled as "Prior Art." This objection is respectfully traversed.

By this Amended, Figs. 15 and 16 are amended to incorporate the label as "Prior Art." Accordingly, withdrawal of the objections is respectfully requested.

II. Specification Objection

The Office Action objects to the specification for numerous typographical errors.

This objection is respectfully traversed.

By this Amendment, the specification is amended to correct the ministerial errors.

Accordingly, withdrawal of the objection is respectfully requested.

III. Claim Objection

The Office Action objects to claim 8 over an informality. This objection is respectfully traversed.

By this Amendment, claim 8 is amended in accordance with the Examiner's recommendations.

Accordingly, withdrawal of the objection is respectfully requested.

IV. Claim Rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102

The Office Action rejects claims 1, 4, 10, 11, 13 and 15-18 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) over U.S. Patent No. 5,743,967 (Kobori). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

By this Amendment, claims 4 and 16 are cancelled. Thus, the rejection as to claims 4 and 16 is moot.

It is well settled that a claim is anticipated only if each and every element set forth in the claim is found, either expressly or inherently described, in a single prior art reference. See MPEP § 2131. Despite the Office Action's assertions, Kobori does not teach each and every feature presently recited in claim 1, 10, 11, 13, 15, 17 and 18.

Independent claim 1 recites, in part, "plural ring-like plates which surround the at least three support columns, are provided at multi-stages on the support columns, and are provided substantially horizontally at a predetermined interval with respect to the substrates supported on the substrate mounting portions, and inner circumferential surfaces of the ring-like plates,

the inner circumferential surfaces being opposite to the support columns, are notched on a periphery of the support columns" (emphasis added).

Similarly, independent claim 11 recites, in part, "plural ring-like plates which surround the at least three support columns, are provided at multi-stages on the support columns, and are provided substantially horizontally at a predetermined interval with respect to the substrates held by the substrate holder, and inner circumferential surfaces of the ring-like plates, the inner circumferential surfaces being opposite to the support columns, are notched on a periphery of the support columns" (emphasis added).

Independent claim 15 recites, in part, "plural ring-like plates which surround the at least three support columns, are provided at multi-stages on the support columns, and provided substantially horizontally at a predetermined interval with respect to the substrates supported on the substrate mounting portions, wherein inner circumferential surfaces of the ring-like plates, the inner circumferential surfaces being opposite to the support columns, are notched on a periphery of the support columns" (emphasis added).

Claim 17 recites, in part, "plural ring-like plates which surround the at least three support columns, are provided at multi-stages on the support columns, and are provided substantially horizontally at a predetermined interval with respect to the substrates held by the substrate holder, wherein inner circumferential surfaces of the ring-like plates, the inner circumferential surfaces being opposite to the support columns, are notched on a periphery of the support columns" (emphasis added).

Finally, independent claim 18 recites, in part, "plural ring-like plates which surround the at least three support columns, are provided at multi-stages on the support columns, and are provided substantially horizontally at a predetermined interval with respect to the substrates supported on the substrate mounting portions, and inner circumferential surfaces of

the ring-like plates, the inner circumferential surfaces being opposite to the support columns, are notched on a periphery of the support columns" (emphasis added).

As discussed above, independent claims 1, 11, 15, 17 and 18 recite, among other features, the support columns being surrounded by a ring-like plate. Applicants respectfully submit that the applied references fail to teach, disclose or suggest at least this feature, regardless of the interpreted meaning of "on a periphery of the support columns."

In fact, Kobori discloses a boat pillar being provided at an outer circumferential portion of a corrective frame. Thus, the boat pillar disclosed in Kobari is not surrounded by a ring-like plate. Therefore, Kobari fails to teach, disclose or suggest the presently claimed combination of features recited in claims 1, 11, 15, 17 and 18. Thus, Kobori fails to disclose each and every element recited in claims 1, 11, 15, 17 and 18.

Claims 10 and 13 variously depend from claims 1 and 11. Because Kobori fails to teach, disclose or suggest the features recited in independent claims 1 and 11, dependent claims 10 and 13 are patentable for at least the reasons that claims 1 and 11 are patentable, as well as for the additional features they recite.

Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejections is respectfully requested.

V. Claim Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103

The Office Action rejects claims 2, 5, and 6 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Kobori in view of JP 2001-168175 (Minami); rejects claims 3 and 7 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Kobori in view of Minami, and further in view of U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0070095 (Osaka); and rejects claims 8-9, 12 and 14 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Kobori in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,820,683 (Ishii), and further in view of Minami. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

By this Amendment, claims 5 and 7 are cancelled. Thus, the rejections as to claims 5 and 7 is moot.

It is well settled that in determining the differences between the prior art and the claims, the question under 35 U.S.C. § 103 is not whether the differences themselves would have been obvious, but whether the claimed invention as a whole would have been obvious. *See* MPEP § 2141.02. To this end, a prior art reference must be considered in its entirety, i.e., as a whole, including portions that would lead away from the claimed invention. *See* MPEP § 2141.02 VI.

To establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness, three basic criteria must be met: (1) there must be some suggestion or motivation to modify the reference or to combine reference teachings; (2) there must be reasonable expectation of success; and (3) the prior art reference must teach or suggest all the claim limitations. *See* MPEP § 2142.

As discussed above, independent claim 1 recites, in part, plural ring-like plates which surround the at least three support columns, are provided at multi-stages on the support columns, and are provided substantially horizontally at a predetermined interval with respect to the substrates supported on the substrate mounting portions, and inner circumferential surfaces of the ring-like plates, the inner circumferential surfaces being opposite to the support columns, are notched on a periphery of the support columns" (emphasis added).

Similarly, independent claim 11 recites, in part, "plural ring-like plates which surround the at least three support columns, are provided at multi-stages on the support columns, and are provided substantially horizontally at a predetermined interval with respect to the substrates held by the substrate holder, and inner circumferential surfaces of the ring-like plates, the inner circumferential surfaces being opposite to the support columns, are notched on a periphery of the support columns" (emphasis added).

Kobori, Minami, Osaka and Ishii, in any combination, do not teach, disclose or suggest the support columns being surrounded by a ring-like plate. Thus, Minami, Osaka and Ishii do not supply the subject matter missing in Kobori. Therefore, Kobori, Minami, Osaka

and Ishii, either individually or in combination, do not teach, disclose or suggest the subject matter recited in claims 1 and 11. Accordingly, because the prior art references, in any combination, fail to teach or suggest all the claim limitations, the applied references cannot properly support a *prima facie* case of obviousness with which to reject claims 1 and 11, or the claims depending therefrom.

Claims 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 12 and 14 variously depend from claims 1 and 11. Because the applied references, in any combination, fail to render the subject matter of independent claims 1 and 11 obvious, dependent claims 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 12 and 14 are patentable for at least the reasons that claims 1 and 11 are patentable, as well as for the additional features they recite.

Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejections is respectfully requested.

VI. New Claims

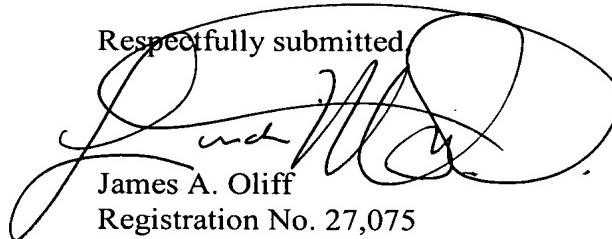
By this Amendment, claims 19-27 are added. Claims 19-27 variously depend from claims 1, 11 and 15. Thus, claims 19-27 are allowable for the same reasons that claims 1, 11 and 15 are allowable as well as for the additional features they recite.

Accordingly, allowance of the claims is respectfully requested.

VII. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of the claims are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted

James A. Oliff
Registration No. 27,075

Linda M. Saltiel
Registration No. 51,122

JAO:LMS/dqs

Attachment:

Replacement Sheet
Petition for Extension of Time
Amendment Transmittal

Date: November 27, 2007

OLIFF & BERRIDGE, PLC
P.O. Box 19928
Alexandria, Virginia 22320
Telephone: (703) 836-6400

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